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ABSTRACT

North Carolina's approach and philosophy concerning K-3 programs are described. Information is provided on the following topics: (1) early childhood education (K-3) background; (2) State Board of Education objectives for kindergarten-early childhood education centers; (3) the reasons for kindergartens; (4) major trends in early childhood education; (5) the importance of full-day kindergartens; (6) the nuts and bolts of kindergarten-early childhood education--the teacher and teacher assistant, instructional materials and equipment; (7) facts and figures on State-supported kindergartens; (8) evaluation of the 1969-71 early childhood program, including retention data; (9) classroom space; (10) availability of teachers; (11) federally funded kindergartens; and (12) how children with special problems fit in. (KM)

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INFORMATION ABOUT

KINDERGARTEN-EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (K-3)

PS 006562

PREPARED BY THE DIVISION OF KINDERGARTEN - EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
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EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (K-3) BACKGROUND

The 1969 State Legislature allocated one million dollars for the planning and implementation of eight kindergarten centers, one in each educational district, to serve as model projects for curriculum planning and teacher training. Since then, greater funds ($4.3 million in 1971-73) have been allocated to study these centers and to expand the program by increasing their number to 74. The Division of Kindergarten and Early Childhood Education (K-ECE) in the State Department of Public Instruction has been working with the LINC staff, several colleges and universities, school systems, and eight federally funded K-ECE Staff Development Coordinators in organizing both the State pilot programs and the ESEA Title I program for disadvantaged children.

The focus of the Early Childhood Program is the "K-3 child-centered or open classroom concept." It features organization and characteristics new to many educators: multi-age grouping, teachers who direct learning activities rather than dispense knowledge, daily achievement and success for each learner, the absence of desks, grades, and report cards. This total concept has not been easily introduced; it has required intensive teacher-training on the part of school systems, universities, and the State Department of Public Instruction. Student teachers are being exposed to the classroom situation earlier, trained more extensively in the use of a wide variety of learning tools and activity ideas, and are better instructed to cooperate with other teachers and teaching specialists in the guidance of exceptional children. Parents have contributed a tremendous amount of energy and interest in building classroom furniture and equipment, working in the library, helping children who have special reading problems, or just talking to children who need adult attention for incentive or counseling services.

The goal of Early Childhood Education is to be "child-oriented." The child is to be aware at all times of his progress, and of how he can learn independently, as well as from the teacher or fellow-classmates. The involvement in learning these children are experiencing is a step forward in education. Each child is being taught to relate--to academic subjects, to others, and especially to himself as a total person. Therefore, the aim of the teacher of a K-3 class is to develop in each child a good self-image and to encourage happiness in learning. Although it takes far more planning and daring on the teacher's part to run an "open" classroom, the results are proving the worth of the operational theory that every child is different and must develop his own interests at his own rate.

Because the kindergarten program is relatively new, selection of participants has been necessarily limited. The State has tried to take a random sampling of children 5-6 years

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old with no previous kindergarten experience, achieving a balance of sex and race. The mildly handicapped are also being included in order that they may learn more quickly and be accepted more readily by other children. It is hoped that by 1973, each of the 100 counties will have one or more demonstration centers, and that all will cooperate with the federally and privately run kindergartens. At the same time, more teachers and teacher assistants will be trained to handle the new participants.

Studies on the students in the original eight centers have shown that they are far better prepared and more motivated than those children who have not had the benefit of early childhood educational experiences. Thus, educators are eager to have all young children in their school systems experience the kind of individual incentive and creativity that has marked the K-3 Program. Enthusiasm, skill, and experience are here in Early Childhood Education--the only element lacking for the program's success is funds for its implementation.

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STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION OBJECTIVES FOR KINDERGARTEN-EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CENTERS

The primary functions of these centers will be to:

(1) develop and implement kindergarten programs as an integral part of effective educational programs for young children, ages 5-8

(2) develop, in cooperation with higher education institutions, effective training programs for professional and paraprofessional personnel

(3) directly involve parents in the development and implementation of such programs

(4) develop ways and means of inter-agency (regional agencies, health, and welfare) collaboration and cooperation in serving the needs of young children

(5) develop comprehensive and effective programs of evaluation for each aspect of the program

(6) provide information about the program for dissemination throughout the State

(Adopted by the North Carolina State Board of Education July 3, 1969)

BROAD GOALS FOR KINDERGARTEN-EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

1. Stimulate each child's feelings of confidence and self-worth through offering him many experiences within his range of interests and competencies which will result in a joy and love for learning.

2. Provide a child-centered program which includes concrete, multi-sensory experiences that have meaning for the child and extend his awareness and understanding of the world around him through an interdisciplinary curriculum approach.

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3. Provide an environment organized around learning interest centers in which the child can use language to label and categorize objects as well as situations which require problem solving and decision making, questioning, evaluation, and discovering.

4. Include curriculum experiences that stimulate and encourage creativity.

5. Include a variety of forms of written and oral expression which are accounts of personal and group experiences, i.e., conversational group discussions, experience stories, etc.

6. Utilize games and play activities which help children to use their bodies with ease, to cooperate with others, to be imaginative, and to try out various social roles.

7. Develop a broad conceptual base moving from the concrete to the abstract in order to make skills in all areas of the curriculum more meaningful.

8. Provide times for the child to work individually as well as in large and small group activities.

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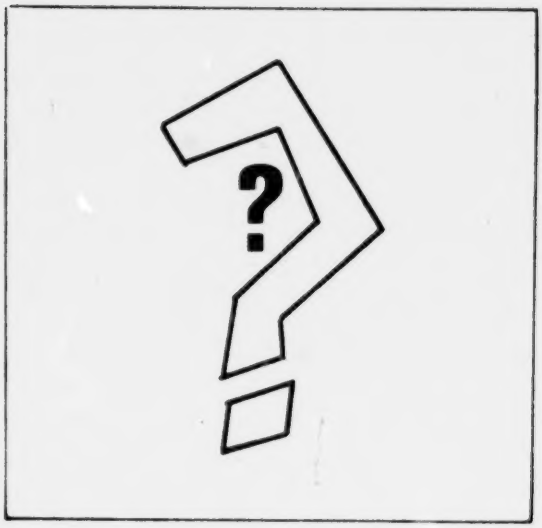

WHY KINDERGARTENS?

Quality kindergarten programs provide young children with an abundant supply of the experiences which they depend upon for normal growth and development. While kindergarten experiences are important for intellectual development, they are also crucial in facilitating physical, social, and emotional growth. Research studies indicate that the early years are critical in all areas of development.

The environment of the early years has lasting effects upon the individual's intelligence, personality, and physical and mental well-being.

One investigator of the relationship between early environment and intelligence is Dr. Benjamin S. Bloom of the University of Chicago. As a result of a series of experiments conducted over several years at the Center for the Advanced Study of the Behavioral Sciences, Dr. Bloom has concluded:

> Both the correlational data and the absolute scale of intelligence development make it clear that intelligence is a developing function and that the stability of measured intelligence increases with age. Both types of data suggest that in terms of intelligence measured at age 17, about 50% of the development takes place between conception and age 4, about 30% between ages 4 and 8, and about 20% between ages 8 and 17.
>
> . . . a conservative estimate of the effect of extreme environments on intelligence is about 20 I.Q. points. This could mean the difference between a life in an institution for the feeble minded or a productive life in society. It could mean the difference between a professional career and an occupation which is at the semi-skilled or unskilled level. A society which places great emphasis on verbal learning and rational problem solving and which greatly needs highly skilled and well-trained individuals to carry on political-social-economic functions in an increasingly complex world cannot ignore the enormous consequences of deprivation as it affects the development of general intelligence.
>
> Benjamin S. Bloom, Stability and Change in Human Characteristics, pp. 88 and 89

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Some of the more significant environmental factors which affect intelligence are language experiences, opportunities for contact with the world and with books and other media, opportunities to solve problems, and interaction between children and adults.

Kindergartens have always been designed to provide an abundance of these positive environmental factors. The research results obtained so far in North Carolina indicate that the State and federally supported kindergarten programs have been very successful in providing this quality environment for five-year-old children. (See "Evaluation of the 1969-71 Early Childhood Education Program.")

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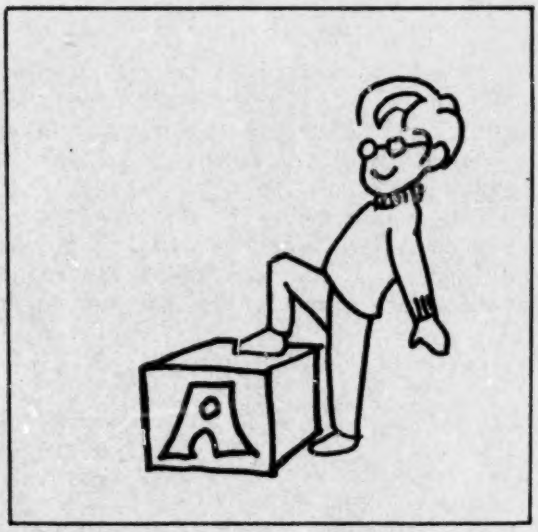

MAJOR TRENDS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Informal education gives children the opportunity to make choices, initiate their own learning, and also engage in supervised activities based upon individual needs. One of the major goals of informal education is to help children become life-long independent learners. Some considerations for developing a child-centered learning environment are as follows:

Child Development

All aspects of child development are considered. The traditional 3 R's do not have to suffer as attention is given to the emotional, physical, social, and mental health of children. If child development is the base, then we must consider the following:

1. Children learn best by doing.
2. Children have ways of learning all their own.
3. Learning skills evolve from the simple, to the concrete, to the abstract as children mature.
4. Learning is enhanced when the learner is involved in decisions about what is to be learned.
5. Children function best in a threat-free environment.
6. Acceptance of the child, and what he brings to the learning situation, is fundamental in helping him move along the learning continuum.

The Classroom

If critical thinking, independence in learning, problem solving, self-awareness, and moral integrity are some of the worthy goals of education, then the classroom will be arranged and equipped to reflect a belief in these goals.

It is difficult to analyze, and think through many problems if the child spends most of the day in his seat, in a row, listening to the teacher or working through selected material that may or may not be based upon his developmental learning level.

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The informal classroom is rich with all kinds of materials and supplies. Included are materials children can manipulate, teacher-made materials, and free or inexpensive materials. There are many opportunities to explore, experiment, share, consult with adults or other children, work in small or large groups, and to work alone. Children are encouraged through learning-interest centers in math, reading, writing, science, social studies, the arts, etc. to observe, explore, record, and think. The teacher structures the environment, selects materials, and makes many professional decisions based on his acute knowledge and observation of the children. Contrary to the belief of some critics of informal education, skills are not de-emphasized but rather placed in proper perspective.

John Holt wrote, in WHAT DO I DO MONDAY

> "...We could not and should not try to separate the skills of an activity from the activity itself."
>
> "When we try to teach a child a disembodied skill, we say in effect, 'You must learn to do this thing in here, so that later on you can go and do something quite different out there.' This destroys the continuum of experience within which true learning can only take place. We should try to do instead in school as much as possible of what people are doing in the world."

The real world is not made up of neat little packets called arithmetic, reading, science, etc. In the real world, things connect one to the other. The world can be studied and explored beginning at any place. Math can evolve from block play, or reading can begin at the fish bowl. The important thing is that learning begins and at a point meaningful to the child.

Vertical Grouping

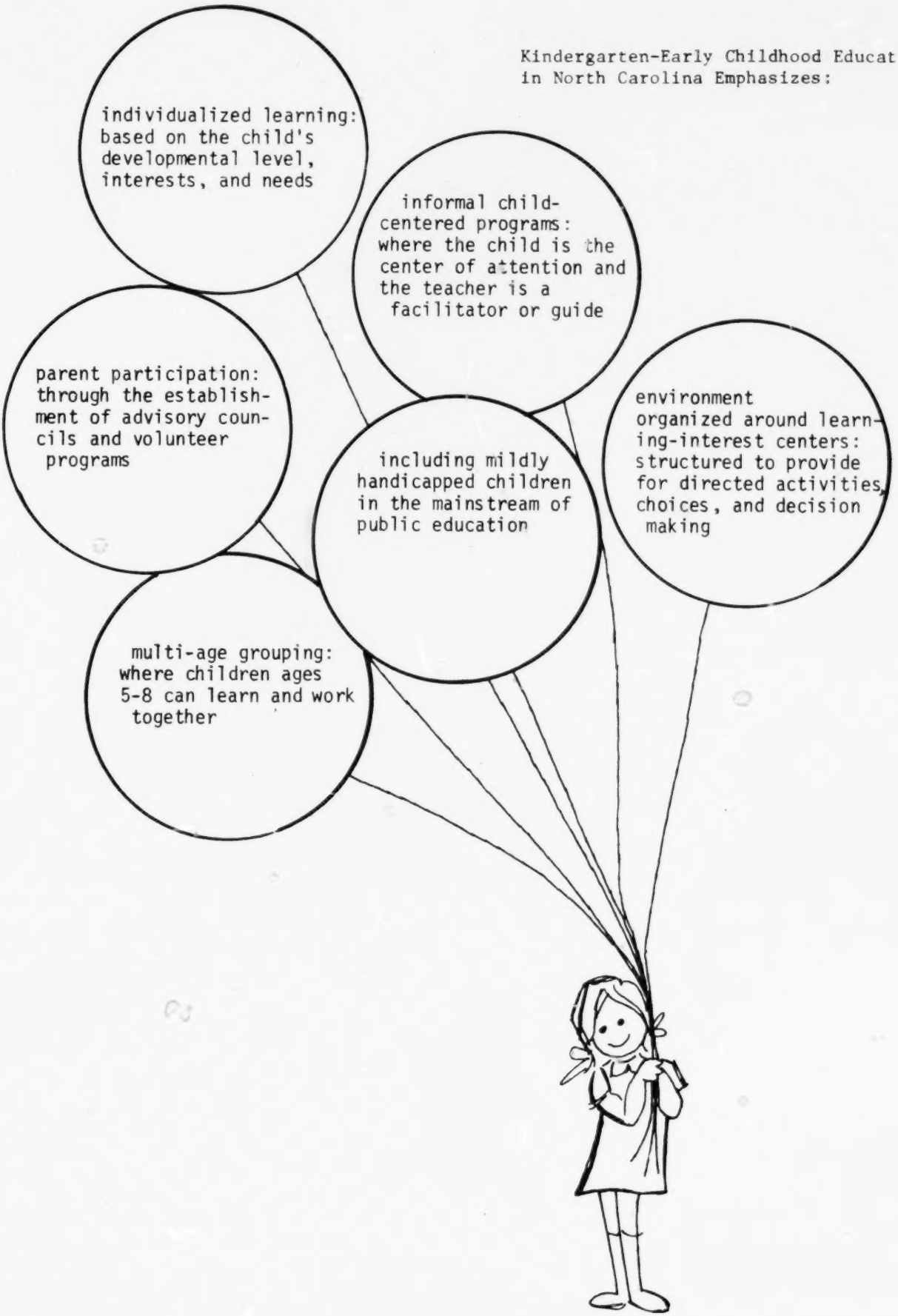
The grouping of children in school continues to rank high on the list of unresolved questions facing educators. Most grouping practices in the past represent an effort to narrow the range of abilities within a given classroom based on the assumption that teachers could teach better.

Children grouped together across age lines more nearly represent the real world in which they live. In vertical grouped classes, the effect of the help which children of different ages consciously and unconsciously give to each other is immeasurable. It has far-reaching effects on social and intellectual development; it stimulates the development of spoken language; it ranges from absorption of knowledge through incidental activities to teaching of reading skills by older children to younger children. At the same time, the older child is able to reinforce and use his new skill by teaching it. Responsibility and independence developed in older children are transmitted to younger ones and they, in turn, pass this on to still younger children. The vertical grouped class becomes a learning laboratory where children learn from each other.

Parent Involvement

The involvement of parents in the educational program is receiving emphasis today. Parents are serving on advisory councils, as volunteers in the schools, participating in the development of teacher-made materials, curriculum workshops, and other school and community activities.

Kindergarten-Early Childhood Education
in North Carolina Emphasizes:


individualized learning: based on the child's developmental level, interests, and needs
informal child-centered programs: where the child is the center of attention and the teacher is a facilitator or guide
parent participation: through the establishment of advisory councils and volunteer programs
including mildly handicapped children in the mainstream of public education
environment organized around learning-interest centers: structured to provide for directed activities, choices, and decision making
multi-age grouping: where children ages 5-8 can learn and work together

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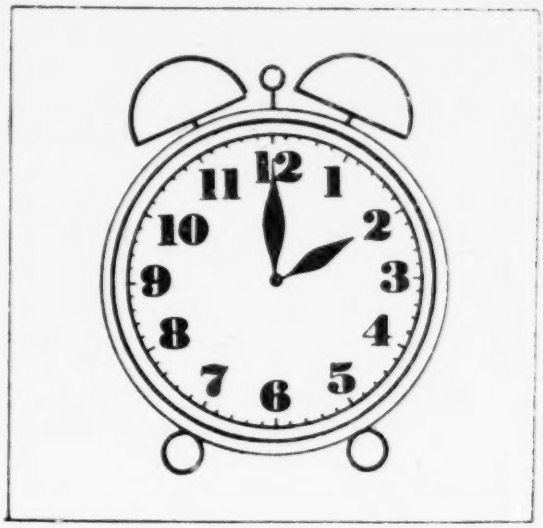

THE IMPORTANCE OF FULL-DAY KINDERGARTENS

The first objective of the North Carolina Kindergarten Program is "to develop kindergarten as an integral part of the primary school system for children ages 5-8." Some people view the kindergarten program as a separate entity rather than an integral part of the elementary system. Because of this, some school districts in the nation offer only 2 1/2 hours per day in their kindergarten programs. This amount of time is inadequate for the child as well as the teacher.

What is a full-day kindergarten? A full-day kindergarten is one in which one teacher, assisted by one aide, with approximately 23 children, is responsible for one group of children in one classroom area. In such a situation, only one group uses a classroom area per day. The children do not need to share their teacher, space, or work. The work can be continued during a longer period of time. North Carolina has a minimum kindergarten day of 3 1/2 hours; however, most North Carolina State-supported kindergartens operate a day for five-year-olds comparable to the day for six-year-olds. Although the amount of time children spend in school is important, the most important thing is the quality of that time. Children should receive a balanced, comprehensive program which includes health services, physical education programs, good social interaction programs as well as strong learning programs in all areas of the curriculum.

A full-day program:

1. Provides opportunities for a better balanced, less hurried day for children.
2. Provides an opportunity for the regular elementary bus system to be utilized.
3. Allows the staff to give more individual attention and provide a more comprehensive child development program.
4. Provides ample time for learning that comes from a balanced program and for snacks, lunch, rest, and learning opportunities in all areas.
5. Recognizes that the first year of school for a child is the most important.
6. Increases time and opportunities to provide for first-hand experiences that lay the foundation for all future learning.

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7. Provides time for a child to organize his experiences, test his ideas, and come up with generalizations to be used in handling future situations and making decisions.

8. Recognizes that kindergarten teachers have the responsibility to work with parents regarding an effective school program.

9. It is supported by research that indicates by the age of six the child has developed approximately two-thirds of his intellectual capacity.

10. Provides time for in-service training, home visits, and comprehensive planning for comprehensive programs.

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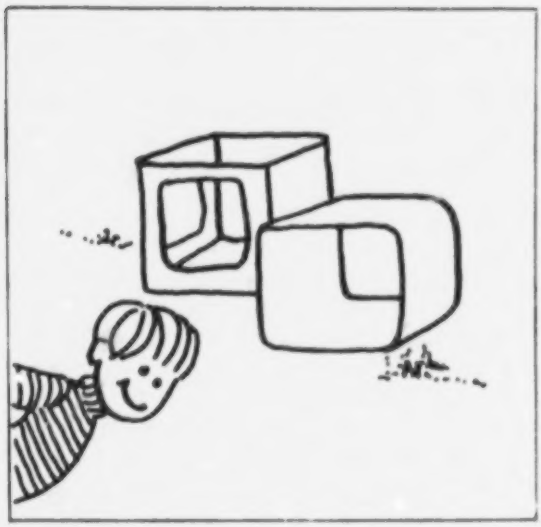

THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF KINDERGARTEN-EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

- A center includes 46 five-year-old children as an integral part of a primary school.
- The center includes two teachers, two aides, two classrooms, instructional materials and equipment, staff training, transportation, consultant services, evaluation, and fringe benefits.

The Teacher and Teacher Assistant

In this program, the teacher's role is changed from the traditional role of just telling children what to do, supplying information, and arranging tasks for children to do without choice. The new role demands that she teach by providing appropriate materials and conditions for using them, by working and playing with children, by providing choices within the classroom environment, by promoting an atmosphere of happiness, self-help, mutual respect and cooperation, and by establishing standards and limits. The teacher is an acute observer and diagnostician who truly capitalizes upon the child's needs and interests. She keeps records of all areas of each child's development and reports to parents. She inspires, motivates, extends learning, and sets an example. To perform the above mentioned functions effectively, the adult working with children needs to be a flexible, loving person who feels secure herself. When there is a teacher assistant (who might be a paid person, a parent volunteer, or an older student), he or she plans and works very closely with the teacher in all the above areas, not as a servant or maid. He or she is not asked to do anything the teacher does not do herself.

Instructional Materials and Equipment

Certain basic equipment and materials are appropriate for all early childhood programs which seek to influence the physical, emotional, intellectual, and aesthetic development of young children. Many of the materials suggested below perform various functions in addition to the one specified.

Equipment should be provided for large muscle building, during both indoor and outdoor play. Some suggestions include: climbing apparatus, wheeled toys, large hollow blocks, woodworking tools and lumber, balance boards, ropes, balls, and bean bags.

Materials which develop eye-hand coordination and build small muscles are necessary. Puzzles, beads for stringing, small blocks, design blocks, peg sets, flannel board and cut-outs, magnetic board with shaped pieces, and sorting boxes are examples of such materials.

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There should be equipment and materials that encourage dramatic play. These include dress-up clothes, mirror, transportation toys, toy animals, and dolls, as well as child-sized housekeeping furniture and unit blocks.

Examples of supplies needed for math include dominoes, abacus, dice, calendar, measuring cups and spoons, counting cubes, scales, rulers, play money, and cash register. For science experimentation, there should be a magnifying glass, magnets, batteries and bulbs, prisms, compass, thermometer, balance weights, gardening tools, an aquarium, and a cage for pets.

A large and varied collection of books is needed to foster language development, as well as to reinforce academic concepts. Story records, tape recorder and earphones, picture lotto and dominoes, perception and sequence puzzles, puppets, chalkboards, and large chart tablets should also be furnished.

Equipment for music and rhythms should include a record player, records, auto harp, step bells, and rhythm instruments. Some supplies needed for art are powder and finger paint, brushes, crayons, chalk, paste, clay, paper (newsprint and construction), and scissors.

The above suggestions are very limited and should be expanded upon. For example, facilities for cooking in the classroom can provide a wide range of learning experiences - from learning to measure ingredients to learning about nutrition. Also, unstructured and inexpensive materials such as sand, water, bottle caps, beans, remnants of cloth, buttons, etc. should be provided. Here again, utilization of the total school, home, and community environment is necessary.

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FACTS AND FIGURES ON STATE-SUPPORTED KINDERGARTENS

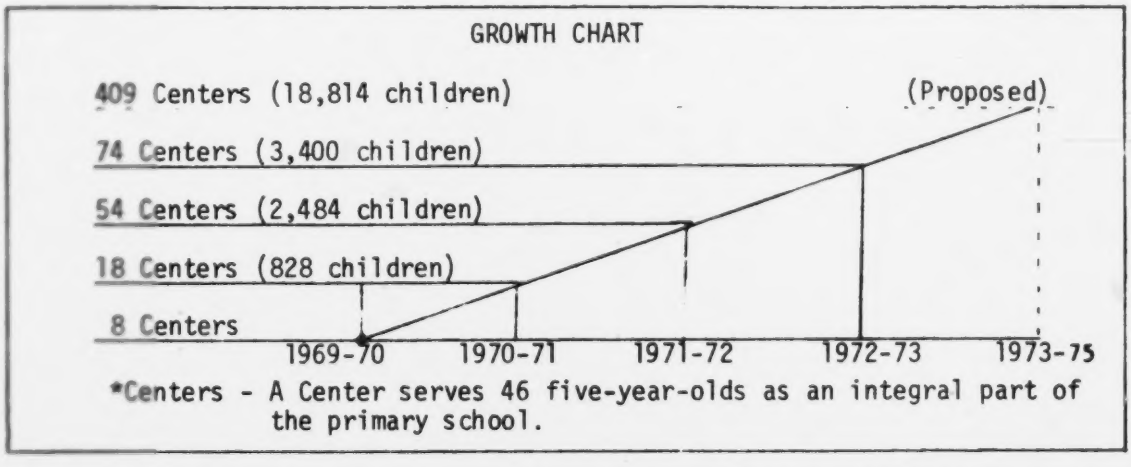
Where We Are

NORTH CAROLINA HAS APPROXIMATELY 86,900 FIVE-YEAR-OLDS.

74 Kindergarten-Early Childhood Education Centers are serving 3,400 five-year-olds during the 1972-73 school year.

$4.3 million in State funds were appropriated and spent during the 1971-73 biennium, or $710.00 per child per year. Each center receives approximately $31,000.

Where We Want To Go



The State Board of Education's request is to serve an additional 18,814 five-year-olds during the second year of the 1973-75 biennium at a cost of $21,727,083.

It will take $61.7 million per year for all five-year-olds. (Based on 86,900 x $710.00 per child.) This is the goal of the State Board of Education by 1979.

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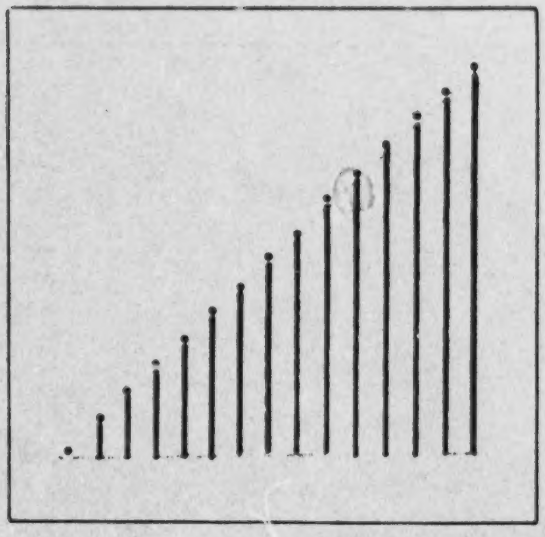

EVALUATION OF THE 1969-71 EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM

Children enrolled in the North Carolina State-supported kindergarten program have consistently advanced from approximately the 35th percentile at the beginning of the school year to the 65th percentile at the end of the year on the two basic tests of knowledge in the areas of language and mathematics. Stated another way, at the beginning of the kindergarten experience, the North Carolina five-year-olds' average on the tests scored in the bottom one-third of the national five-year-old sample, while at the end of the year, the North Carolina children's average had progressed to the top one-third of the national sample ranking. The results on another test showed that the average mental age of the North Carolina pre-schoolers increased approximately two months for each one month enrolled in the kindergarten program.

In order to determine if the improvements in test scores for the experimental group of children enrolled in kindergarten could be attributed to the program, a control group of children (who applied to attend but were not selected in the random sampling) was utilized. At the end of the first year of the study (in June 1970), the control group means on the language and mathematics tests approximately equaled those of the December 1969 means scored by the experimental group. During the second year of the program, while the five-year-olds who had attended kindergarten moved to approximately the upper third of the national sample, the control group remained well below the 50th percentile.

An interesting fact discovered during the first year (1969-70) of the project is that the children who gained the most were the ones who needed to gain the most--the ones who would have been poor school performers without the program. This is illustrated by the finding that the center with the lowest averages at the beginning made the greatest gains on four of the basic tests.

Another finding of the study (1970-71) is that the North Carolina six-year-olds who have attended kindergarten are better prepared to go on in school. This result was indicated by comparing the performance on a standard Stanford Achievement Test of first grade students who had attended kindergarten with those who had not. Data also indicates that fewer six-year-olds are being retained in first grade in State kindergarten centers:

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RETENTION DATA

A December 1972 sampling of schools with State-Supported Kindergarten Programs was surveyed to determine the effect kindergarten programs had upon the retention rate.

	Retention percent among children not attending State-supported kindergarten	Retention percent among kindergarten children
First Grade 1970-71	8.77%	1.34%
Second Grade 1971-72	3.27%	Only one retained
First Grade 1971-72	7.45%	Less than 1%

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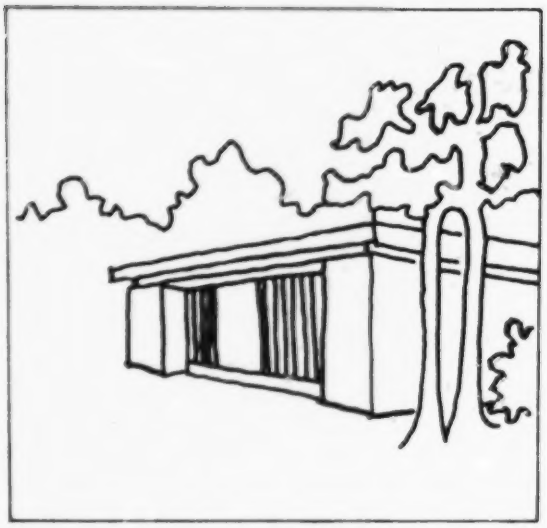

CLASSROOM SPACE

During the past five years, the primary school enrollment has declined. The statistics for Average Daily Membership (ADM) in the primary grades are as follows:

AVERAGE DAILY MEMBERSHIP IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

Grades	1967-68	1968-69	1969-70	1970-71	1971-72	Decrease
1	111,506*	109,676*	106,415*	104,085*	97,351*	14,155
2	105,260	105,615	103,726	100,777	98,981	6,272
3	104,406	103,091	103,055	101,155	98,547	5,859
					Total	26,293**

*This includes approximately ten per cent of first graders who "failed" and were retained. (Special Note - During the above five-year period - over 95,000 primary children failed and were retained at average additional cost to our school system of over $33,500,000.) (See Survey of Retention with and without kindergarten training)

**The decrease represents approximately 875 classrooms.

Extra classroom space has been made available as schools have reorganized to comply with the Civil Rights Act. High schools have been consolidated and elementary schools have been closed--both of which leaves extra classroom space.

The decline in birth rate, the reorganization and consolidation of public schools, and the State Board of Education's tri-biennial planning will provide classroom space for all five-year-olds during the 1970's. Some few school systems do not have immediate space for kindergartens; however, mobile classrooms and other arrangements have been made where this has been the case. The majority of school systems in North Carolina are now making plans either to renovate existing classrooms or to construct new classrooms for the purpose

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of accommodating kindergarten children. A telephone survey of 18 superintendents of large North Carolina school systems on December 23, 1972, revealed that 414 classrooms will be available for renovation for kindergartens for the 1973-74 school year. It is highly recommended that the classroom spaces for K-ECE centers be as close as possible to where primary education shall continue. This is a vital aspect to making the kindergartens an integral part of primary schools.

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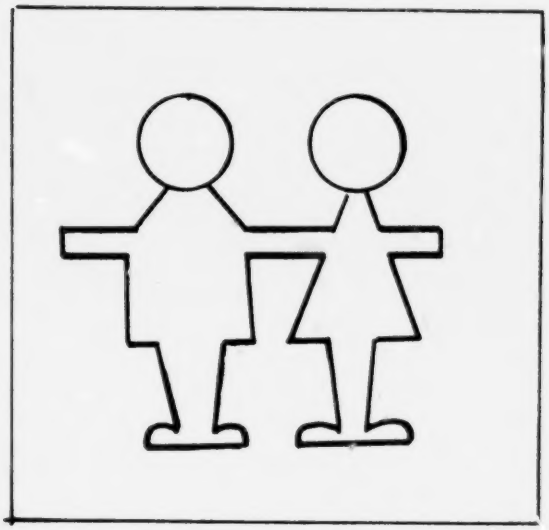

AVAILABILITY OF TEACHERS

Colleges and universities which have teacher training programs are now concentrating in the area of K-3 certification. A recent survey of the State's teacher-training institutions revealed that 1,162 students will graduate in June of 1973 with a certificate in K-3 (Early Childhood Education). This would provide a more than ample supply of teachers to staff the centers proposed for 1973-75.

The decline in birth rate which results in a decline in enrollment is freeing up available elementary school teachers. A strong in-service plan is built into the North Carolina Early Childhood Program which prepares these elementary teachers to work with the young child. This has been a major part of the success of the North Carolina plan.

Staff Development

Approximately 2,500 kindergarten teachers, kindergarten aides, primary teachers, principals, supervisors, and special education teachers have attended training institutes sponsored by Public Instruction, LINC, universities, eight K-ECE staff development coordinators, and school systems.

The major funding source for training has been in the form of grants from:

Department of Health, Education and Welfare
(EPDA) Education Professional Development Act
Public Law 90-35 Part U-D Grant #OEG-0-70-4211
U. S. Office of Education
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Department of Health, Education and Welfare
ESEA Title III, Section 306
Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (p.l. 89-10)
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It will be necessary for this cooperation to continue as new programs develop. It represents an example of a way in which federal and State funds have been focused on the same need to produce results for children which neither funding source could have done separately. These training programs are also an excellent example of cooperative relationships with universities, the State Department of Public Instruction, the Learning Institute of North Carolina (LINC), and participating school systems.

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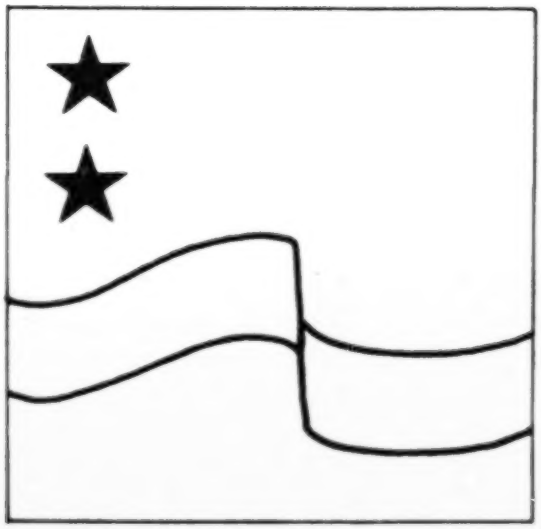
With the yearly expansion of the State Kindergarten Early Childhood Program, the need for staff development continues to grow. The nature of the State program requires intensive initial training, with support activities for most teachers continued over a period of two to three years. Therefore, one major thrust of this project is in providing effective training opportunities for the staffs of the K-3 early childhood schools. Staff development coordinators, one located in each of the eight educational districts, are employed to coordinate training.

Division of Kindergarten-Early Childhood Education
North Carolina Department of Public Instruction
Raleigh, N. C. 27602 (919) 829-3081



FEDERALLY-FUNDED KINDERGARTENS

Title I, Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

The Division of Compensatory Education places high priority on the development of specially designed pre-school programs for educationally deprived children. Together with the Division of Kindergarten-Early Childhood Education, it is encouraging and coordinating compensatory programs and pre- and in-service staff development which will provide supplementary services to children at an early age. As a result, many school systems in North Carolina provide kindergarten classes under the federal Title I Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

ENROLLMENT BY YEARS - ESEA TITLE I

Year	No. of Adm. Units	No. Children
1966-67	17	2,717
1967-68	24	4,238
1968-69	42	7,482
1969-70	57	10,500
1970-71	79	12,362
1971-72	70	11,790
1972-73	75	15,632

Since the spring of 1966, when Title I programs were first put into operation in the schools of North Carolina, an increasing number of local school units have included kindergarten as part of their Title I projects. During the current fiscal year (1973), $7,958,587 in Title I funds have been budgeted to provide the advantage of pre-school training to 15,632 eligible children. A total of 673 kindergarten teachers, and almost as many kindergarten aides, have been employed for these classes.

During the early years of Title I, most kindergarten teachers had to be recruited from the ranks of those holding primary and grammar grade certificates, because the teacher

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training institutions in North Carolina had very limited offerings in kindergarten education. To assist these "out of field" teachers, the local units scheduled workshops, summer institutes, and in-service programs in early childhood education as part of their Title I projects.

More recently, the Divisions of Compensatory Education and Early Childhood Education in the Department of Public Instruction, have used Title I funds to provide workshops and summer institutes in Kindergarten-Early Childhood Education. Also, Title I funds have been used to underwrite summer institutes at the University of North Carolina under contract to the Department of Public Instruction.

Because Title I is categorical aid, limited to assisting educationally deprived children, attendance at these workshops and institutes is restricted to teachers working in kindergartens funded by Title I.

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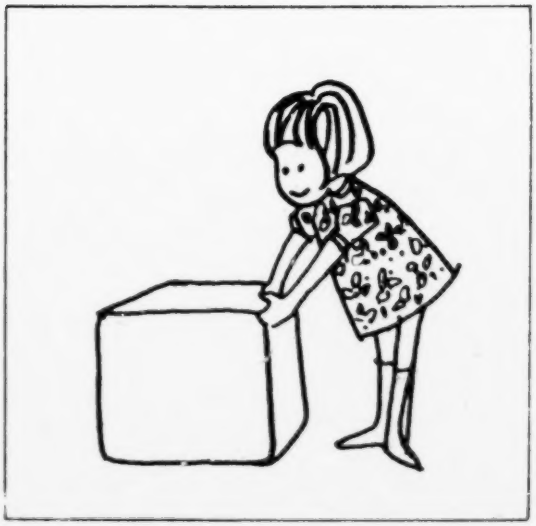

HOW CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL PROBLEMS FIT IN

Even if North Carolina had the resources to extend special programs to all handicapped children, the existing special programs offered in North Carolina cannot deal with the needs of some handicapped children. Within the general population of handicapped children, the degree of problem as well as the diversity of problems range from those children whose handicapping condition is minimal or temporary to those who need full-time institutionalization. Within this range, there are children who can achieve their potential if they are provided with an educational setting in a regular classroom which not only allows for, but capitalizes on, individual differences. The kindergarten-early childhood education concept of thinking about the entire child -- his emotional and social growth, as well as his academic life -- provides all children an opportunity within the regular classroom an opportunity to reach their maximum potential. Because the kindergarten-early childhood concept embodies this philosophy, the opportunity for handicapped children to approach their maximum potential within the framework of regular education is made possible.

Because there is no reliable research concerning this philosophy, a special education coordinator has been employed to provide staff development opportunities to the four western educational districts and to develop innovative mechanisms for successful implementation of this philosophy. Her primary attention has been focused on one school site to initiate, develop, and successfully implement effective procedures for the integration of developmentally handicapped children into the regular classroom.

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